

Hans-Dietrich GENSCHER
(Phonetic: GEN-sher)

GERMANY

*The Chancellor, Minister of
Foreign Affairs (since 1970)*

Addressed as Mr. Minister



The year 1991 has been difficult for German politicians, and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has taken more than his fair share of blame. Although he still enjoys public popularity polls, he has faced unusually harsh criticism for his handling of a series of international crises. In early 1991 he managed the US-led coalition's withdrawal in one effort to remove Iraq from Kuwait and was threatened by the German press for his weak response. More recently, conservative German politicians have attacked his stated emphasis on the need to maintain a united Yugoslavia, and he then incurred the wrath of EC colleagues when he refused to directness and become an established champion of self-determination. And like almost all politicians, he was caught off guard during the United States' coup in mid-August. In each case Genscher has responded with a characteristic return to steady diplomacy. However, these trips have taken on such a frantic pace that his credibility has suffered and his image as the master diplomat has been tarnished.

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Despite these setbacks Genscher remains the chief architect of German foreign and security policy. Public support for his approach to European integration and disarmament and the strategic position of his Free Democratic Party (FDP) within the coalition with the larger Christian Democrats (now CDU) remains strong. Genscher and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who have worked for each other since Kohl's dependence on the other for a parliamentary majority. They are above a basic belief in NATO's central role in German security, European peace and economic integration, and further international and nuclear disarmament. Genscher's dominance of foreign policy making has led Genscher down the road of compromise to ensure that German foreign policy reflects his interests as well.

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Genscher runs his Ministry with an eye for the media and for the public. He speaks rather than acts. He speaks very often and in his office, he has frequent informal consultations with the decision-making process. Genscher guards his opinions and knows how to use the Ministry of FDP officials. He personally and personally pursues his goals, controls the media, builds public support, and thus ensures the right channels to press his case.

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A skilled politician who sees his foreign policy mission for domestic advantage, Genscher remains the de facto leader of the FDP, despite suffering away from the top spot in 1990. He carefully guards the FDP's autonomy and sees public conflict with the CDU to strengthen his party's image. He is now working to ensure that a new generation of FDP leaders gain prominence, his support enabled Jürgen Möllemann to become Economic Minister and Klaus Kinkel to take over the Justice Ministry.

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Security and Foreign Policy View

Recent political developments have reinforced Genscher's belief that power politics is a thing of the past. In speeches and in talks with his Foreign Ministry staff Genscher defines

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German security is political and economic rather than military terms.

Genscher also believes in "regions of security." For example, although he supports NATO as the central guarantor of German security, he believes that the CSCE is the best international body to overcome the division of Europe and that the EC should play the leading role in European political integration. Genscher also believes it is the right time to proceed rapidly with conventional and nuclear disarmament. In recent weeks he has been reiterating his call for the removal of all ground-based, short-range nuclear weapons from Europe.

Genscher places great importance on the U.N. and is recent months his Ministry has offered several initiatives to increase its power and efficiency. In addition, he supports amending his country's constitution to allow German military participation in UN-led operations outside the NATO area, nonetheless, he leaves open the possibility of German involvement in a multinational European force if European political union can be achieved. Recently he has also advocated the creation of "blue helmet" peacekeeping and "green helmet" ecological troops within the CSCE.

The European Arena

Genscher is much more a Europeanist than an Atlanticist. Although he insists that the United States will continue to play a central political role in Europe through its membership in NATO and the CSCE, his utmost goal is to create a single Europe. He repeatedly reminds his EC colleagues that "Europe" encompasses the entire continent and not just the current West European members of the EC. At the same time he is a strong advocate of political and economic union, arguing that a larger EC will successfully require enhanced decision-making powers. To achieve these goals Genscher is not only working with French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, with whom he has a close relationship, but also with foreign ministers from other EC nations, depending on the issue. For example, he and Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis have attempted to find a solution to the Yugoslavian crisis.

Genscher is probably Western Europe's strongest supporter of assistance for the Soviet Union. He has had to moderate his preference for working with the center in order to increase his contacts with republican leaders. He met with Russian President Boris Yeltsin on 10 September before visiting the three new Baltic countries.

Career and Personal Data

Genscher was born on 2. March 1927 in Halle, after studying law at the Universities of Halle and Leipzig, he left East Germany in 1952 to settle in the West. He now visits Halle regularly, often with other Western leaders, and his high profile in the area has helped to make Halle an FDP stronghold. Genscher has served in the Bundestag since 1969 and was Interior Minister during 1981-84. He left the FDP during 1984-85.

He speaks English. He is married to the former Barbara Schmidt, he has a daughter from his previous marriage.

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